by Syriac Christians who speak Syriac and Arabic. A few villages are completely Armenian. Most of these villages are around Kubur el Bid and Qamishli. These Christian peasants are very devout. They are also conservative and always remember the injuries inflicted upon them in Turkey. There is hardly a Christian family in the towns or villages which did not lose a relative or a friend in the massacres. Therefore they are always on their guard against their Moslem neighbors and are always suspicious of the Government. Their bitterness is not likely to disappear for some time to come, and is a factor to be considered in the political development of Jazirah.

The Christians of Jazirah belong to all creeds and denominations. The largest community in numbers and in importance is the Syriac Orthodox, followed by the Armanian Orthodox. There are Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics, Armanian Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Nestorians. It should be mentioned that what determines the origin and affiliation of a man in Jazirah is not his language or dress, but his Church. Thus a Kurd who speaks only the Kurdish language, who lives like a Kurd on the same standard of living, and who dresses like one, is yet an Armenian or a Chaldean or a Jacobite because he belongs to one of these Churches. His original language and customs have been lost by living for ages in a foreign environment. That is why one finds in Jazirah and the mountains beyond it the only Christian Kurds in the world. But in reality they are not Kurds. They are Armenians or Syriacs or Chaldeans who have adopted the Kurdish language and their true nationality can be known only by referring to their Churches.

A more recent concentration of Christians in Jazirah is constituted by the Assyrians around Tal Tamr on the Khabur. Following the massacre of the Assyrians in Iraq in 1933 and their expulsion from that country, the French in Syria gave them asylum, and the League of Nations appropriated funds to settle them along the Khabur. Lands were granted to them and villages were built in which motors and pumps were installed for irrigation. Nevertheless during these 19 years all the efforts appear to have been useless. The ten thousand Assyrians who migrated to Syria lead a wretched life. Their motors are not in a working condition, their crops are not abundant and they are now trying to sell their lands. The reasons for such a condition may be found in the fact that the Assyrians are not farmers and the lands given to them are of a poor quality.

During the French Mandate, the Christians of Jazirah, with the memory of the Turkish massacres still fresh, and considering all

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PART TWO

III. THE PROBLEM OF WESTERNIZATION

1

AT this point it will be convenient to interrupt the narrative and to analyze the problem which first presented itself to the Syrians in the nineteenth century, and which underlies the political difficulties with which they are faced in the present generation.

This problem can be stated very briefly. An old way of thought and life, which has gone unchallenged and fundamentally unchanged for some hundreds of years, finds itself in some ways opposed, in others inescapably transformed by the new civilization of the West.

In consequence, the Syrians find themselves no longer living in a united and coherent world, but torn between two worlds, neither of which is altogether their own. How will it be possible for them, by preserving or modifying the old and accepting what is new, once more to form a unified world of thought and life which they can call their own?

2

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Syria formed part of a world which had a civilization of its own: a religion, a culture and a way of life. It was a unified civilization, in which every sphere of life was regulated by a system of generally accepted principles, themselves drawn from religion and from immemorial custom. This civilization may be called 'Arabo-Islamic', because its main characteristics were derived, with much borrowing from outside and with many adaptations to the peculiar conditions of Syria, from two main sources, themselves closely connected with one another: the Islamic religion and the life of the Arabian desert.

'Islam' means resignation, and the Moslem, the adherent of Islam, is he who resigns himself to the will of God: not in the sense of passive and fatalistic acceptance of anything which may come, but in that of the complete and voluntary submission of man's will to God's commandments. God is unique, the Creator of the Universe, all-wise and all-powerful; He has revealed His will to man, in a measure sufficient for all the purposes of life, through a long succession of Prophets, who include Moses, Jesus, and finally Muhammad, the Arabian of the seventh century, to whom was given the final revelation

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which superseded and completed all previous ones. This final revelation is preserved for the use and knowledge of mankind in the Quran, the Moslem Holy Book.

The Quran embodies the principles in accordance with which a man's whole life should be lived; on the basis of those principles Moslem thinkers have erected a moral system covering every form of human activity, however seemingly unimportant. Thus the religious duties of a Moslem are unlimited and all-embracing; but certain of them are prior to others, and fulfilment of them is essential for every true Moslem. The most important of these are summarized in the so-called 'Pillars of Islam'. A true Moslem must testify that 'there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God'. He must pray five times a day; give alms to the poor; fast during the month of Ramadan; and make the pilgrimage to Mecca, should circumstances permit him, at least once in his lifetime.

Men should perform these and other duties primarily because they emanate from the will of God, but also because on their obeying or disobeying God's will depends the fate of their immortal souls in the next world. God who created the world will some day bring it to an end; on the final Day of Judgement all will be held responsible for their actions. The virtuous will be granted eternal felicity in Paradise, but the vicious everlasting torment in Hell.

The moral system of Islam covers the life not only of individuals but also of human associations, and among them of that association called the State. Islam knows no Church, and therefore no distinction between Church and State, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world. The Islamic State is an association of Moslems for the purpose of living in accordance with the tenets of their religion and of extending its sway throughout the world. The law of the State is the law of Islam; the function of the ruler is to defend the State against unbelievers, to administer Moslem law as defined by those learned in it, and himself to be bound by it in his relations with his subjects. They for their part owe him loyalty as a religious duty. In short, the Islamic community as it has traditionally been conceived is to its members all and more than all that the nation is to the modern Western man. Islam in its great days was a nation, transcending distinctions of race or colour. Although an

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Arabic-speaking Moslem might take a special pride in the peculiar relation of the Arabs to Islam, and in the dimly-remembered splendours of the early Caliphates, it is safe to say that normally he did not distinguish his being an Arab from his being a Moslem, and even when he did so it was the latter which was foremost in his thought and life.

3

For over a thousand years the majority of the population of Syria had been Moslem. There was not, however, complete unanimity in matters of religious belief. On the one hand, besides the Sunni or orthodox Moslems there were several heterodox Islamic and semi-Islamic sects: Shi'is, Druzes, Alawis and Isma'ilis. On the other hand, there still survived a number of Christian sects, Catholic, Greek Orthodox and others, which had come into existence in the early centuries of the Church's history; and there were in addition a comparatively small number of Jews.

Some of these communities were scattered throughout the country, while others possessed a local predominance in certain parts of it. Most of the districts held by these compact minorities were mountainous. The Lebanese mountains in particular were the homes of dissident communities, either because it was easier for the long-established inhabitants of Lebanon than for their neighbours of the plains to resist the pressure of Islamization, or else because sects which had grown up in the plains migrated to the mountains as an asylum where they would not be molested, or if attacked could better defend themselves. These mountain communities were marked by an especially unbending particularism and resistance to influences from outside.

4

Christians and Jews were left to carry on their own communal life without disturbance. For this there were two main reasons. The first was the Islamic doctrine in regard to Christianity and Judaism. Just as the Moslem regulated his life in accordance with the principles of his faith, so he did not deny a similar right to the Christians.

Moslems are not taught by their faith to regard Christians as inherently inferior, since it is in their power to become Moslems, and so enter the community of true believers in

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which the only distinction is that of piety; nor as adherents of a false religion, since Islam considers Jesus to have been one of the succession of true prophets. They regard them as having gone astray, first in taking the revelation of Jesus as the final and complete revelation, and secondly in looking upon Jesus not simply as a prophet, a man through whom God's word has come to mankind, but as God incarnate. It is the doctrine of the Incarnation, and therefore also the doctrine of the Trinity, which are for Moslems the stumbling-blocks in Christianity. As 'People of the Book', believers in God, in prophecy and in the Day of Judgement, Christians like Jews are to be tolerated and to be allowed a certain status by the side of the Islamic community. But they cannot be regarded as members of that community. Nor can a Moslem willingly acquiesce in subjection to a non-Moslem Government, although his own weakness may compel a temporary submission.

Such is the attitude towards Christians which Islam enjoins: an attitude of reasoned and well-defined tolerance. But it is not surprising that there should during the thousand years of almost unchallenged Moslem supremacy have been periods of persecution, nor that the ordinary Moslem should have come to feel a certain contempt for the Eastern Christians who were the only Christians he knew: the contempt which he who knows himself to be strong feels for those in his power, and which he who believes himself to possess the truth feels for those who have rejected it.

The other reason for the persistence of the Christian and Jewish communities was the existence of a certain view of the State: a view which was universally accepted in western Asia, and indeed far beyond it, until recent generations. According to this view the Government existed to defend the cultivated lands, to maintain order, to tax their populations, and for nothing more. The laws by which the life of the individual and of society was regulated sprang not from positive enactment of the ruler but from the religious doctrines and ancestral customs to which individual and society adhered. It is true that since the ruling power was Moslem by faith, the Moslem religious law and the courts had a special relation to the Government. But a Moslem would no more have thought of compelling Christians and Jews to conform to Moslem law in matters of personal life and relationships than they of

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abandoning their own religious codes. Law was personal. Not simply was there no concept of equality before the law; there was no idea of sameness.

For these reasons, throughout the period of Arab and Ottoman rule the Christians and Jews were allowed a certain autonomy. Each sect formed a community, or as it was called in Arabic a 'millah' and in Turkish a 'millet', within the State and co-terminous with it. In matters affecting the community, the Government treated with it as a whole through its heads, and not with the members of it individually. Certain civil functions were devolved upon the spiritual heads and representative bodies of the communities. They were allowed to administer the property and institutions of their communities and to decide matters of personal status—marriage, divorce, inheritance and so on—in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

This system originated long before the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. It developed gradually and was only formalized in the nineteenth century by a series of Imperial edicts. Throughout the period of Moslem ascendancy it succeeded in preserving self-respect and a sense of community among the religious minorities, although it may also have helped to perpetuate bitterness and suspicion between them.

The heterodox sects which clung to the fringes of Islam were in a more ambiguous position. Officially they were regarded as parts of the general body of Islam; but in fact the cleavage between them and the orthodox was almost as great as that between Moslems and Christians, and they like the Christians were usually left to direct their internal affairs in accordance with customary law and the precepts of their religions.

5

Since for Moslems and Christians alike consciousness of belonging to a religious community was the basis of political and social obligation, both were very conscious of not belonging to other communities; and the sense of distinctiveness led easily to suspicion and dislike. This was true also of every Christian sect in its relations with the others, for each sect formed a separate 'millet'; and of the orthodox Moslems in their relations with the heterodox. Difference of sect was

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no less important an element in the common consciousness than difference of religion.

It may be, indeed, that the religious doctrines to which the communities adhered were not in all cases the fundamental cause of their distinctiveness; that when these doctrines were first preached certain elements in the population already felt themselves in various ways and for various reasons different from the peoples among whom they lived and by whom they were dominated; and that they adopted the new doctrines as an expression of their distinctiveness. Whatever its origin, a sect once founded tended to become a closed community very conscious of its difference from the surrounding world: a difference which revealed itself not only in religious beliefs but also in customs and traditions. The sect persisted as a social entity even after the impulse of affirmation which gave it birth had died away. To leave one's sect was to leave one's whole world, and to live without loyalties, the protection of a community, the consciousness of solidarity and the comfort of normality.

6

Islam gave the traditional society of Syria its dominant creed, its explicit moral code and its political organization. Its language and literature and its images of heroism and human grandeur came from the Arabian desert.

The way of life of the Bedouin has deeply influenced Islam and been as deeply influenced by it, but the two are distinct. It is a way of life which has developed in order to meet the needs of the nomadic existence, an existence of the utmost bareness, insecurity, homelessness and poverty. It has alone made that existence tolerable and given it dignity and even a certain splendour. For it the cardinal virtues are courage and the other martial qualities; hospitality without limit or thought of recompense; loyalty to one's family and tribe; and reverence for the transmitted wisdom of the community, embodied in tribal customs and traditions and in a code of honour. The life of the Bedouin has no room for subtleties and doubts, and would be wholly barren of culture were it not for the Arab love of language, of story and of poetry.

The Arabian desert produced not only a moral system, but also a social organization. It was based upon the clan and